

Tues Aug 6, 1974

Tender, Loving Care for Video Artists

By JERRY HANDTE

When Binghamton's Experimental Television Center (ETC) opened its nonprofit business of helping people produce videotapes three years ago, it was not unusual for a golfer to come in asking for help in filming his swing to find out why he sliced into the woods.

The center also got calls for help from people wanting to memorialize on film the lovable antics of a pet dog.

But Ralph I. Hocking, the center's director, thinks now he has begun to get the message across that the center is designed to further the development of television as an art.

The individuals the center sometimes helped in its earliest months now are politely steered away unless their projects have a potential interest beyond their own hearthstones.

Hocking and his small staff — resident technician Dave Jones, Canadian artist-in-residence Walter Wright and administrative assistant Sherry Miller — stand ready, with the aid of a New York State Council on the Arts grant — to help any video producer with equipment, advice and even "a warm spot on the floor" to sleep at the center.

Hocking said the other day at the center, a walkup over a drug store at 164 Court St., that "it frees people's minds about television to realize that it can enter their own lives."

The center provides cameras, a Paik-Abe Color Video Synthesizer, which the center played a part in developing, and other equipment for making half-inch tapes, for persons who want to make creative use of television or, sometimes, people trying to produce educational tapes.

In a prospectus submitted to the Internal Revenue Service in a successful application for tax-exempt status, Hocking said the typical user of ETC has a working period of three to six days at the center.

Hocking emphasized that ETC "does not produce" for the artist, but gives him or her a comfortable milieu in which to work, calling on the staff only for technical assistance.

The director, a bearded, academic-looking man with a quiet manner, is an instructor in the Film Department at State University at Binghamton, when time permits, in addition to a man doing over an old house in Owego as a place to live.

Sometimes he finds time to make videotapes of his own, and these frequently are shown in museums and art galleries.

Work done at ETC sometimes is broadcast by educational television stations in Boston and New York City, and occasionally by Channel 46 in Binghamton.

Producers are not required to work only at the center — a large room with small adjoining offices that once was a bingo parlor and a place where veterans' organizations met — but they also can take out equipment to film on location.

The Paik synthesizer and another synthesizer make it possible to get surreal and abstract effects.

Another role of ETC is conducting educational work-



—PRESS PHOTO BY DON BLACK

Ralph Hocking Experiments With a Televised Image at the Experimental Television Center

shops and demonstrations.

These have included three at Vestal High School, two at State University at Binghamton including one for geographers and one in the Master of Arts in teaching program, one at Syracuse University, one at the Stony Brook Center of State University and others for such esoteric groups as the International Silk Screeners.

ETC personnel have taken part in conferences as far away as Michigan, with cable TV companies, the State Historical Society and the Broome-Tioga Board of Cooperative Educational Services.

Products of ETC have been in about a dozen shows including the ninth annual Avant Garde Show in New York City, twice in the Kitchen Show in New York City, and once a show of Hocking's work.

More than 180 persons have used ETC facilities so far.

Hocking, who majored in art education at Eastern Michigan University, has a master's in pottery and sculpture. He is a member of the State Council on the Arts advisory panel on films and television.

He hopes to win a grant for ETC from the National Endowment on the Arts, to supplement a grant from the State Council on the Arts that totaled \$38,536 for 1973-74 and will be somewhat larger in 1974-75.

ETC also has worked with many institutions in the community, including performing arts groups, schools, churches, hospitals and industries.

Wright has much experience in design, computers and video scanning systems.

Jones, a 21-year-old Michigan native, is a 1973 graduate of the Sony Video Technical Training School in Long Island City. In 1971-72 he was vice president for maintenance and engineering for Videoheads of Europe, in partnership with Jack Moore.

Now, about your golf swing ...